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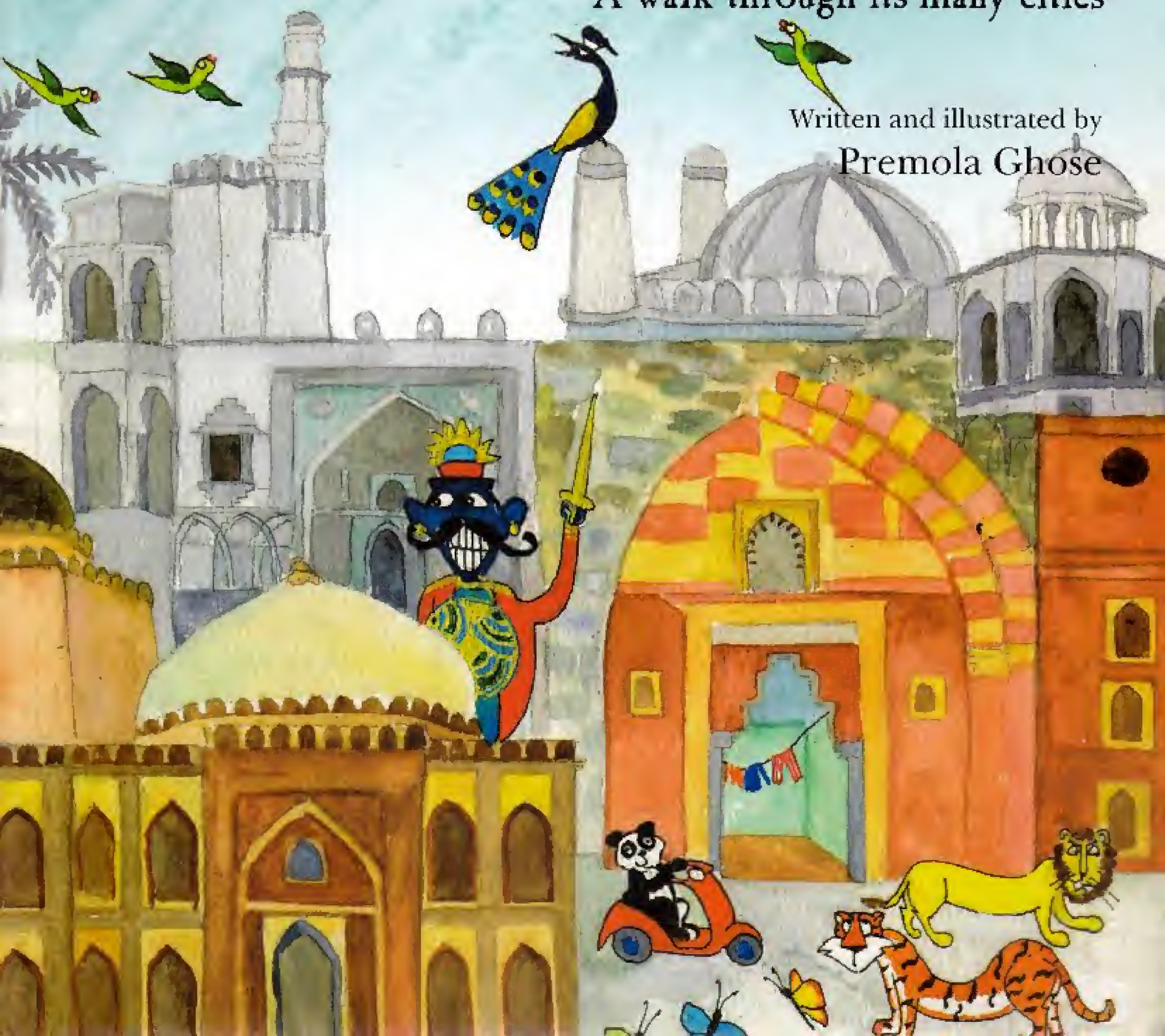


"...brings the history of Delhi alive to the young reader... never a dull moment."
—Avinandan Mukherji, *The Book Review*

Tales of Historic Delhi

A walk through its many cities

Written and illustrated by
Premola Ghose





Tales of Historic Delhi

Written and illustrated by
Premola Ghose

Edited by
Rohini Purang

To my mother who still feels
a stranger in Delhi



Amber Books
India





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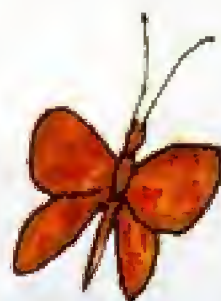
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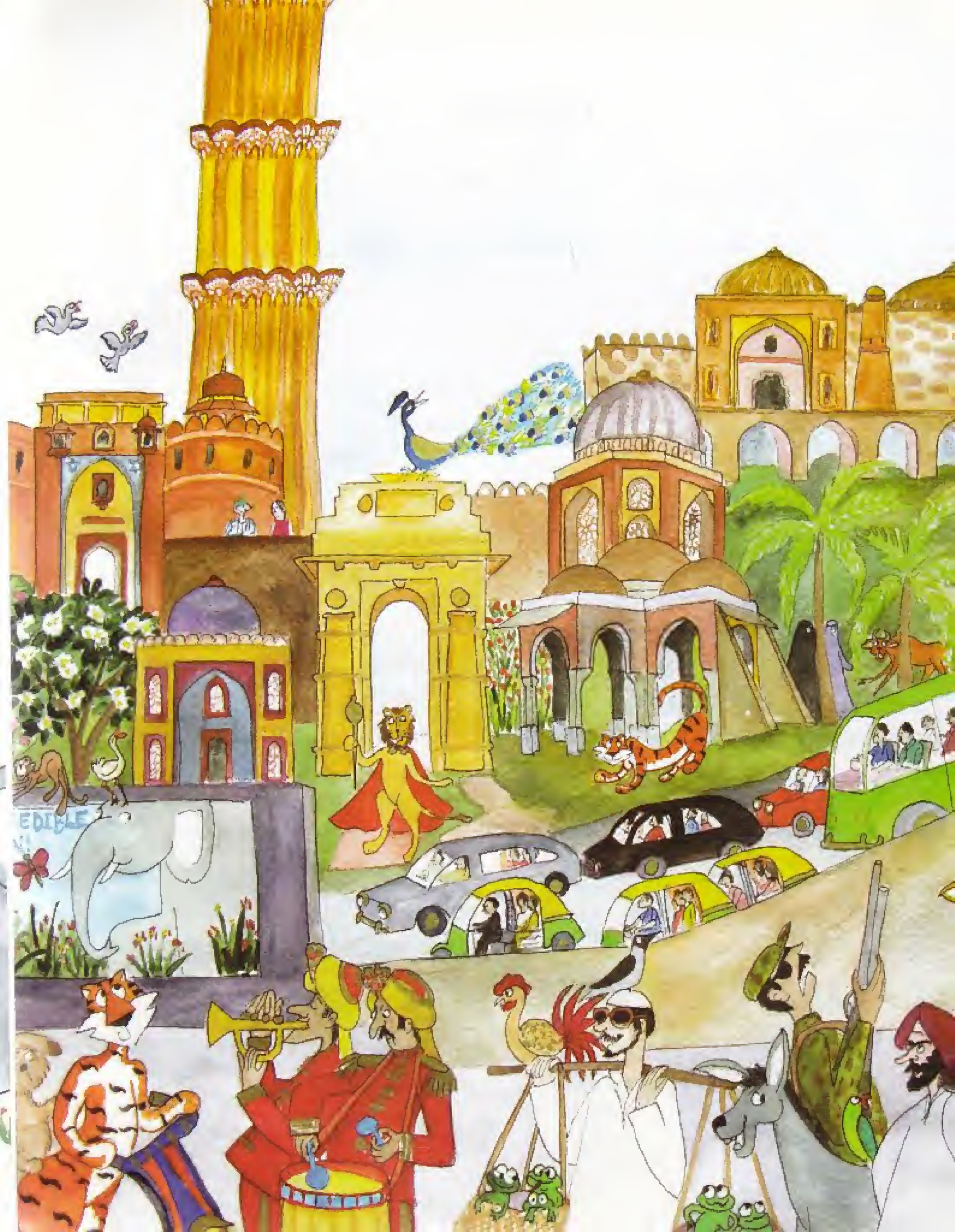
Poonam Bevli Sahi for giving me a very hard push to do this book.



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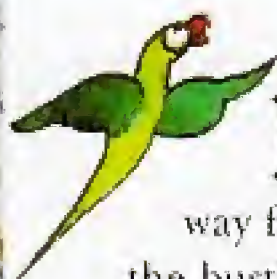
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Chapter 1

Delhi Chalo!



It was the first time that the animals of Janwar Dosti had travelled all the way from the forests of Ranthambhore to the bustling, noisy, fascinating city of Delhi. Dr Kamala, the founder of Janwar Dosti, had decided that it was high time all the animals had a chance to see their country's capital city for themselves.

"Did you know," Dr Kamala trilled in her musical voice, "that in 2011 New Delhi will be one hundred years old?"

"Oooh, can we go to the party?" said Lucky the rabbit, hopping up and down with excitement.

"Will there be cake?" said Tunnu the tiger (a.k.a. TT), who has a surprisingly sweet tooth for a carnivore.

"Pass the parcel!" yelled Bula the bear.

"Presents!" shouted Lucky the rabbit, turning backflips.

"Chowmein!" slurped Zero the giraffe (he had a thing about noodles).

"QUIET!" thundered Dr Kamala. The animals all fell silent — briefly — as she went on, "There's no party. Cities don't have cake — only people do."

"But I saw a picture of a beautiful temple in Delhi that looked sort of like a cake — all frosted with sugar icing..." butted in Tunnu.



"And there's a huge tower thingy," added Bula, "that kind of looks like a candle..."

"You mean the Mutub Kittar," said Mayurdas the peacock, rather pompously.

"Mutub...? Oh, I think you mean the Qutb Minar," said Dr Kamala. "And TT, dear, I think you're thinking of the Lotus Temple — it does look good enough to eat!"

"Pardon me," came a voice. Tota the parrot came swooping down and settled on a low branch. He ruffled his bright green feathers. "I am a bit confused. I thought that Delhi was much, much older than a hundred."

Dr Kamala smiled. "You are right, Tota," she said. "I was only talking about New Delhi. Delhi is hundreds and hundreds of years old... and it's not even one city: it's lots of different cities built one on top of the other. Some people believe that in the Biblical times,

when King Solomon was flying around on his throne on a dark night, he noticed a heavenly light beaming down on Delhi. 'What is this hallowed place that the light of the heavens shines down upon?' he asked. And the angels answered: 'It is the resting place of God's friend.'

"It sounds wonderful!" the animals chorused.

"I have heard that now Delhi is a ruin," sniffed Tunnu, "no forests, no animals..."

"Well," smiled Dr Kamala, "there are other things — cars, houses, shops, bathrooms, museums — it's called the 'civilised world'!"



Bandar the monkey burst into hysterical laughter, “Civilisation!!!! Whazzat?”

“Everything that you are *not*,” said Tunnu, importantly. “Ma’am tell us more ...”

“I’ll happily tell you,” replied Dr Kamala. “But wouldn’t you rather go see them yourselves?”

“YES!” chorused the animals.

They packed up their bags and hopped (and lumbered, and flew) onto the train heading for Delhi. When they got off at New Delhi Railway Station, they could not believe their eyes! Such a hustle and bustle! Such noise and honking! Cars and yellow-green auto rickshaws, bicycles and buses, overbridges and underpasses, Metro stations, bus stops, and ... so many people!

“Wow!” breathed Lucky the rabbit. “This is my kind of town!” He hopped on to Zero the giraffe’s back, and they ambled off to explore. TT borrowed a scooter and went zooming off into the traffic, and Mayurdas and Tota flew up to the top of a big building to get a good look around.

It was all so very different from their peaceful jungle — and a bit overwhelming. Dr Kamala waved her rainbow umbrella in the air — this was the signal for all the animals to follow her to a quiet spot near the Purana Qila.

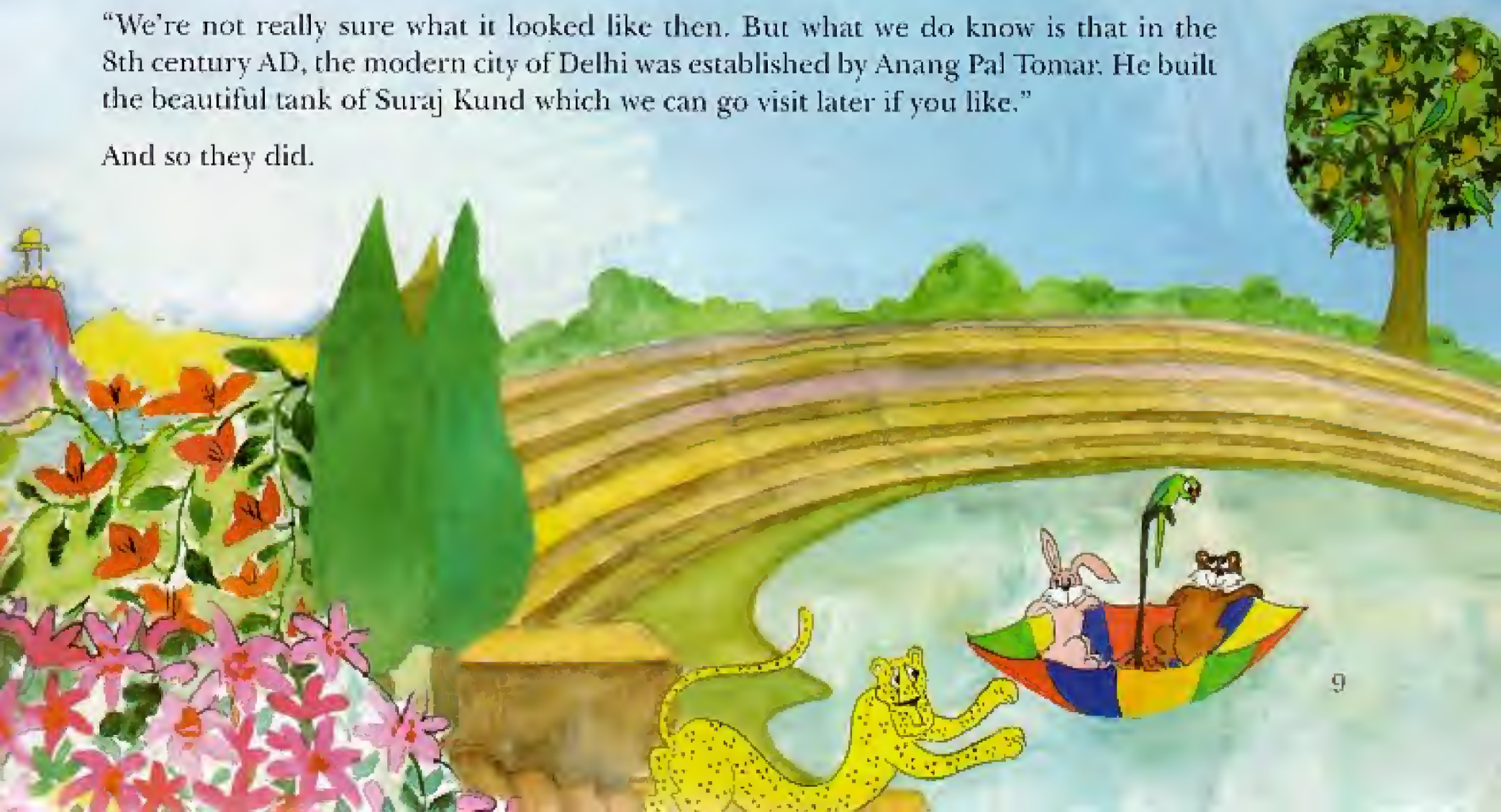
“Is it called ‘*purana*’ because it’s the oldest thing in Delhi?” mused Lucky, gazing up at the fortress walls.

“No,” said Dr Kamala. “But that’s a good guess — and it is pretty old. It was built in the 16th century by Sher Shah Suri. Some people think that it was built on the site of an ancient city called Indraprastha — that dates back to 2500 BC. According to the *Mahabharata*, the Pandava brothers built a spectacular city right here — with gardens and palaces and mansions whose gateways looked like the clouds and reached as high as the mountains.”

“Oh, I would love to have seen that,” sighed Zero the giraffe. “It sounds really grand.”

“We’re not really sure what it looked like then. But what we do know is that in the 8th century AD, the modern city of Delhi was established by Anang Pal Tomar. He built the beautiful tank of Suraj Kund which we can go visit later if you like.”

And so they did.





Chapter 2

Qutb Minar



The Qutb Minar is a minaret about 72m high, in an area of Delhi called Mehrauli.

It is the world's tallest minaret and was built by India's first Muslim ruler, Qutbuddin Aibak. Construction started in 1193 and it took over 150 years to complete. The minaret has five storeys and 379 steps, and is surrounded by other buildings including a mosque, royal tombs and an iron pillar. The Qutb Complex is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

It was a wonderful Sunday morning in December and tourists had come to visit the Qutb Minar. Humans, animals, birds and butterflies strolled and flitted around and the guard on duty was listening to Bollywood songs on his radio.

Mayurdas the peacock was talking to no one in particular about the history of the first city of Delhi. "This city was earlier called Lal Kot. It was renamed Qila Rai Pithora when it was ruled by Prithviraj Chauhan. Prithviraj was defeated in 1192 AD by Muhammed Shamsuddin, who had come from Ghor in Afghanistan. The citadel of Qila Rai Pithora was destroyed, and the Qutb Minar and the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque were built on its ruins."

Bandar the monkey and his new friend Bula the bear came to listen. "See, nothing has been wasted!" Mayurdas continued. "The temple pillars have been used to build the mosque's portico."



Dr Kamala wandered over to join them. "See this iron pillar?" she asked. "It has an inscription by Chandragupta II. The snake Vasuki was pinned underground by this pillar. When Anang Pal Tomara was king of Delhi, he pulled out the pillar and set the serpent free. It was then predicted that no king would rule Delhi forever. We have seen so many dynasties: Tomaras, Chauhans, Slave kings, Khaljis, Tughlaqs, Sayyids, Lodis, Sur Afghans, Mughals and the British. We now have democracy, so no one rules forever even today." Bandar and Bula clapped in appreciation.



Feeling encouraged, Dr Kamala went on. "There is yet another tale about this pillar. You have to stand with your back to it and try to make your hands meet behind you. If you manage to touch fingertips then luck will be on your side."

They watched as a politician tried and tried to make his hands meet, but couldn't quite manage. The dog barked, the donkey brayed and Dr Kamala cried "Failed!"

Zero the giraffe had decided to get a bird's eye view of the Qutb, and was parachuting gently down. "It really looks like a bundle of well-cut sticks with lacy balconies. Quite lovely, I must say! I do like the panels with verses from the Koran... the people that carved this so many years ago were really wonderful artists!"

Perched on the iron pillar, Mayurdas was trying to finish his lecture. "Anyway, *as* I was saying... Qila Rai Pithora had several Sultans: Qutbuddin Aibak, Iltutmish, Raziya — Delhi's only woman ruler — and Balban. These Slave kings were overthrown by Jalaluddin Khalji. Jalaluddin's nephew, Alauddin, was one of the most powerful Sultans of Delhi. They say his heart is buried in the madrasa that lies at the back of the mosque. He wanted to build a minaret higher than the Qutb but the stump near the gate is all he could manage!"

"Before we go," said Dr Kamala, "let's go and see Alauddin's gateway, Alai Darwaza."

When they got there, they saw an elephant, "known to my nears and dears as Ekmukhi." He was seated comfortably in the gateway. He beamed, and waved a bunch of bananas at them.

Bula the bear bounded over. "Are you also from the jungle? You've missed all of Mayurdas's stories!"

"Aha, I heard enough," replied the elephant, addressing the peacock. "You may be a well-read bird, but did you tell our friends that this Minar was not named after Qutbuddin Aibak, but after the great Sufi saint Qutbuddin Bakhtiar Kaki?"

"Well, I..." started Mayurdas, ruffling his feathers. "How do you know, you banana glutton?"

"I am a devotee of the Saint," said Ekmukhi grandly, "and these bananas are simply *divine*. Yum!"







Chapter 3

Siri Fort



Siri Fort is present as ruins of the city built in 1303, north of Mehrauli, near Shahpur Jat. The fort was built during the rule of Alauddin Khilji to defend Delhi and India against Mongol invasions and served as the seat of his power. According to the legend of Alauddin's war exploits, it was called 'siri' ('head') because the foundations were built on the severed heads of about 8,000 Mongol soldiers killed in the war. It is considered to be the first city built by the Muslims in India. The fort was once considered the pride of the city for its palace of a thousand pillars called the Hazar Sutan. The palace was built outside the fort limits, and had marble floors and other stone decoration. Now it is better known for the Siri Fort Auditorium, the Asiad Games Village Complex and residential and commercial establishments near the Siri Fort ruins.

The animals made their way along a busy road called Khel Gaon Marg.

"Where are we going now, Zero?" asked Lucky.

"We're off to see Siri Fort — there's not much of the original fort left, but it's still a fascinating area," the giraffe replied. "Tunnu, you've been reading up on Alauddin Khalji on the Net haven't you? Why don't you tell us all about it while we walk along?"

TT was very proud to be asked, and she immediately began. "This forceful guy had to face several attacks from the Mongols of Central Asia. But he finally defeated them, and by 1308 the Mongols were no longer a threat.

The Seljuk Empire in West Asia was destroyed and scholars, men of the arts and poetry came to the Khalji court seeking jobs."

"Wow!" said Lucky, "that must have brought in many foreigners into India. I do hope the Indian embassies had no problem about giving them visas."

"Ugh!" commented Bula the bear. "They must have brought all their tasteless foreign food with them. I much prefer my favourite fruits — ber and chiku — to all the kebabs of Asia!"

TT ignored these comments and continued. "Alauddin Khalji conquered Rajasthan including our Ranthambhore. One can still see the village of Khiljipur near our jungle where Alauddin's army had laid siege. He fell in love with the beautiful Queen Padmini of Chittor. He wanted to have her and the fort: but although he conquered the fort, he didn't get the Queen.

"Malik Kafur, Alauddin's great general, conquered the Deccan. Wealth, including the Kohinoor diamond, flowed into the Sultan's coffers. By the way, Alauddin built the second city of Delhi at Siri, where he had defeated the Mongols. Which is," she looked around, "right here!" They had arrived at Siri Fort auditorium and could see the ruined walls of ancient Siri that led into the village of Shahpur Jat. The animals headed into Siri Forest Park just as the sun was beginning to set.

"A strange time to visit a park," said Lucky in a frightened voice. Indeed, as they climbed up to the entrance, a mist descended and even the crows fell silent. Suddenly they heard a cackle, a swoosh, and a dark figure appeared through an archway. It was Pappu the witch! "Wake up! Sleeping men from Ulan Bator and bow before my magic broom! Yahoo!"

Then, they heard a strange, soft voice:

"They say two or three
 Make a conspiracy
 So Mongol heads
 Lie beneath flower beds
See how well the hollyhocks grow
 Waving their heads in a row
 They were once men
 From Ulan Bator and Tiananmen
Tee ... hee ... hee
I am ether and free!"







Shapes began to grow out of the shadowy stone walls. Mongol faces, with fearful grimaces, painted and masked wearing turbans and hats! The animals stood rooted to the ground, too scared to run.

The first head spoke: "We are Mongol warriors... my name is Mongke, and this is Batukhan..." gesturing at head number 2, "and this fellow is Pakchak."

Head no. 2 then spoke. "The Sultan named his city Siri, after our heads..."

Then Pakchak piped up. "We lost our bones, only our heads remain to tell this gruesome tale."

Lucky jumped into Bula's arms with fright. "Aie! Ghosts!" But then Pandit Ooo Lala the owl and resident storyteller of Delhi swooped down and hooted scornfully, "Keep your fur on, you scaredy bunny. This is just a sound-and-light show put on for the tourists!"

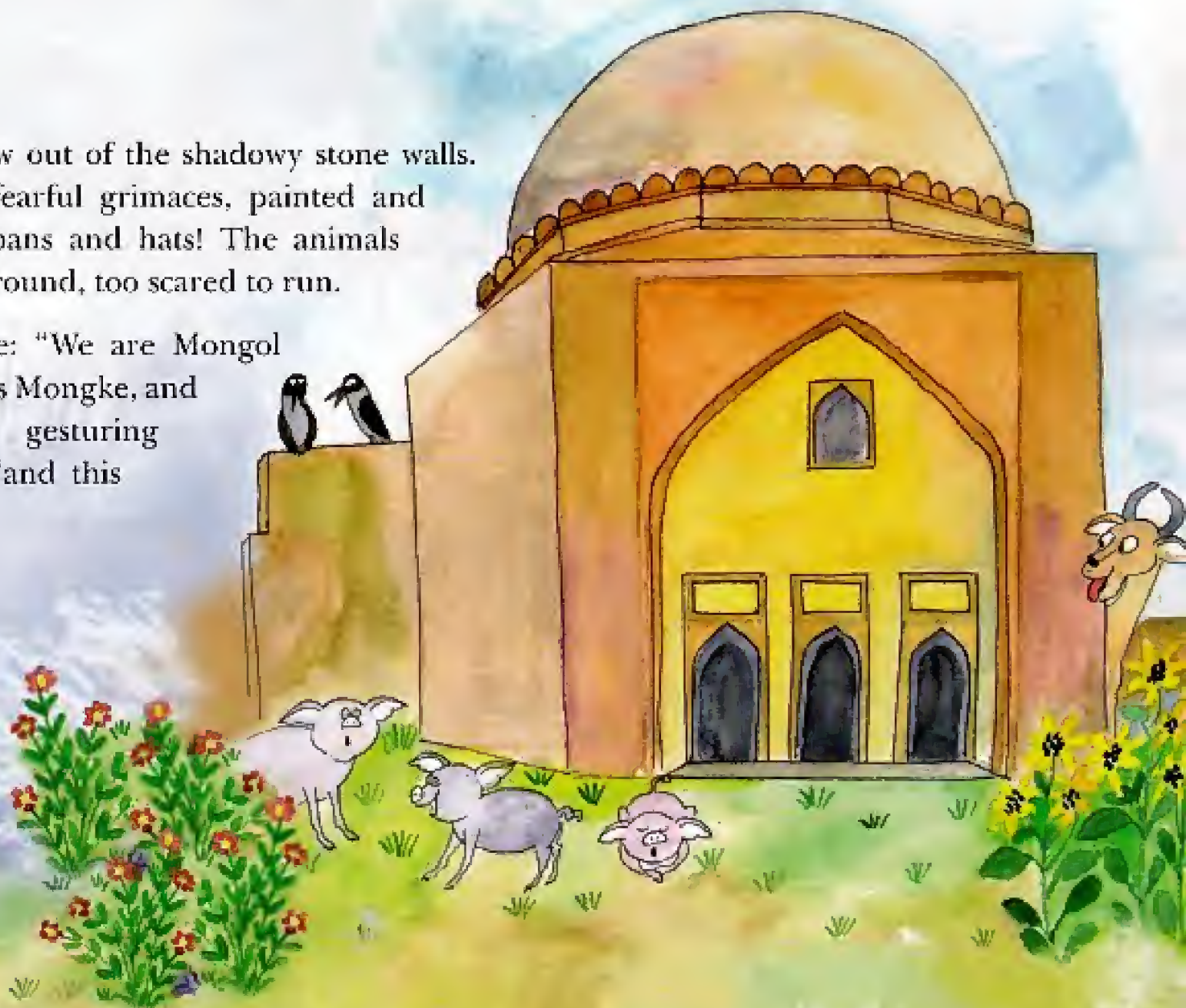
The friends looked around and saw that the owl was right. Only trees and shrubs filled the dark space. TT picked up courage and in an unnaturally loud voice exclaimed, "That was an excellent show! Do you run this every night?"

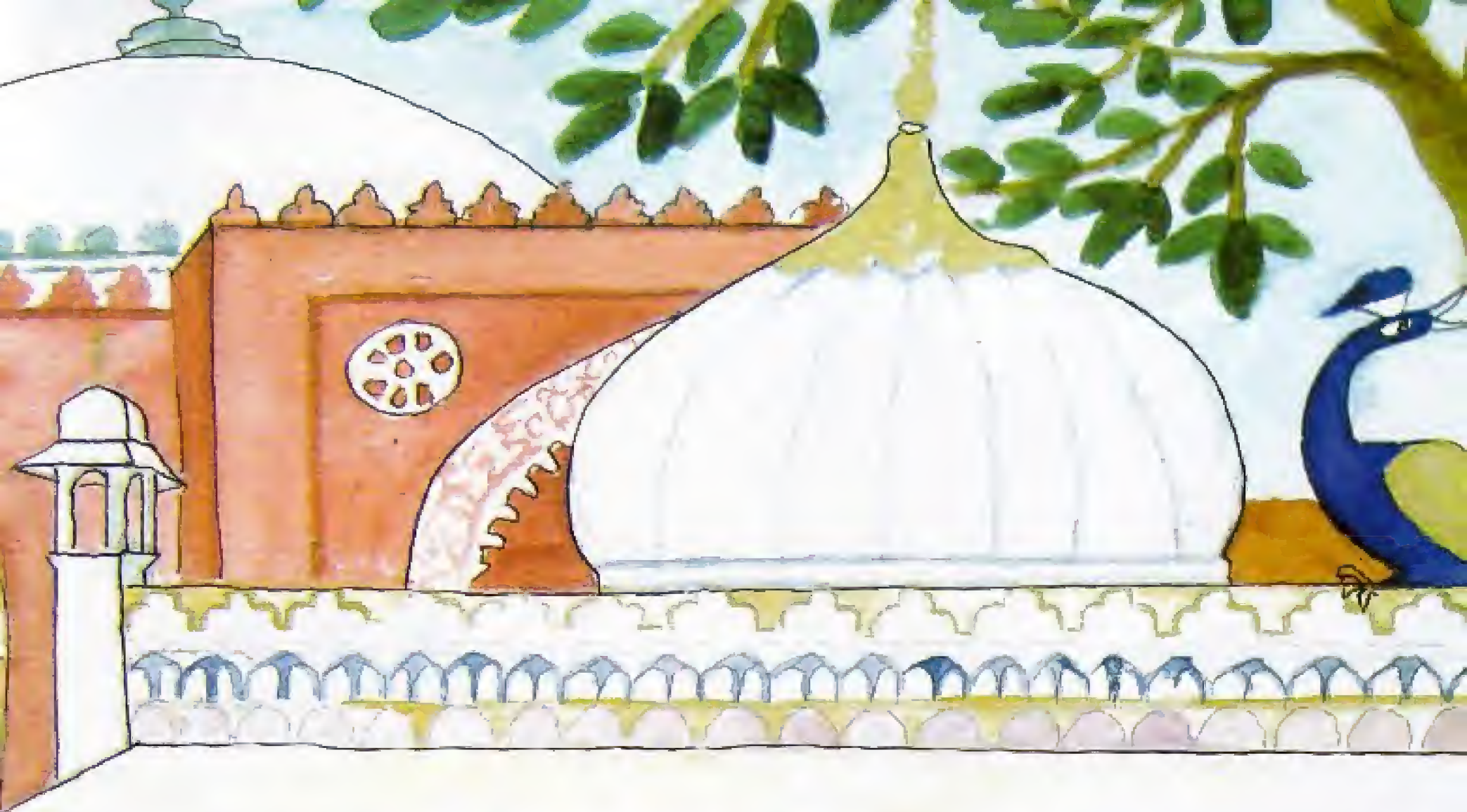
Mongke bobbed up and down, until he was close to TT. His cold and clammy presence sent shivers down the tiger's stripey spine and his voice slurred as he said, "This is no show, this is real stuff. We are looking for that cur Alauddin and his goons!"

Batukhan growled in a ghostly way, "Do you believe in reincarnation?" He eyed Lucky, hungrily. "I do... and I think that the pink rabbit was the Khalji in some past life."

Just at that moment, Pappu swooped at them on her broom. "Get lost or I'll ask the builders to make this wall into a mall! Broken Walls Make Splendid Malls!" she screeched and all at once the ghostly heads of Mongke, Batukhan and Pakchak disappeared like puffs of smoke.

"That's enough history for one night," shivered Tunnu. "Let's get out of here!"







Chapter 4

Nizamuddin



Hazrat Nizamuddin is one of the many historic village settlements, about 2km south of Purana Qila, on Mathura Road. It is named after the famous Sufi saint, Nizamuddin Auliya. The dargah of Nizamuddin is situated here. The saint was popular amongst people of all faiths as he advocated tolerance for all religions. This shrine also houses the tomb of Amir Khusrau, a famous poet and the saint's beloved disciple. The area around the dargah, popularly known as Nizamuddin, is marked by crowded lanes, tombs and mosques, and small shops selling kebabs. Every Thursday, at sunset, the qawwals sing the lyrics of Amir Khusrau.

Everyone knew that Ekmukhi the elephant had a spiritual side, so he was chosen to lead them to Nizamuddin, the resting place for one of the most famous Sufi saints of all time.

As they approached, Ekmukhi told them a tale. "Bismillah! Once a taunting grocer harassed Bakhtiyar Kaki's wife saying 'Ha! If I were not so kind, you and your praying husband would starve.' The Sufi heard this and forbade his wife to buy food on credit. Instead, he told her to recite the name of God at a niche in the wall. And lo and behold, a loaf of bread appeared. They never had to ask anyone for food again."

"That's right," said Pandit Ooo Lala. "And did you know that the name 'Kaki' is derived from 'kak', meaning 'bread'? The ruling Sultan, Iltutmish, was a devotee of Bakhtiar Kaki. And when Kaki died in 1237, the funeral prayers were led by the Sultan himself. But not all Sufi

saints received the same royal patronage. The story of Nizamuddin Auliya is one of a struggle between the Saint and the Sultan."

Once they got to the village of Nizamuddin, the animals squeezed their way through the narrow lanes full of tourists, children, crows, mynahs and kebab sellers and the odd bleating goat.

Lucky was thrilled to see so much action. "Like a movie," she remarked. "Oh dear! That bore Mayurdas is off again."

Bula growled, "Gawd! The winged guide!"

"Ugh!" cawed the crows. "An insult to the Noble House of Avians."

"Don't talk rot," retorted Lucky. "He's our National Bird."



"Quite right, young man," said Mayurdas condescendingly, "now let me see. Nizamuddin Auliya was born in 1238. A disciple of the famous Chishti saint of the Punjab, Baba Farid, Nizamuddin settled in the village of Ghiyaspur, which is the present village of Nizamuddin. Nizamuddin's famous disciples included Sheikh Nasiruddin Mahmud, or Chiragh-e-Dilli, whose dargah is Chiragh village, and the poet, musician and scholar Amir Khusrau, who is buried in the Nizamuddin dargah."

"Yes, but what is a Sufi actually?" asked Bandar, sheepishly.

Pandit Ooo Lala sat up in a tree in solitary splendour. He was the local storyteller. "Good question," he said. "And I think that the best answer is the one that Nizamuddin himself came up with: 'One who has knowledge, reason, love, and is deserving to become a caliph of the Sufi sheikhs'. The last Khalji sultan was Mubarak Shah," she went on, "and everyone used to come and pay tribute to him — everyone, that is, except Nizamuddin Auliya. The Sultan was furious and said that unless he saw Nizamuddin Auliya at the next gathering, he would chop off his head. But do you think that scared him? Not a bit! He visited his mother's grave as usual and went to bed, peacefully. The next morning, the place was abuzz with news: there had been a rebellion in court and Mubarak Shah had been murdered!"

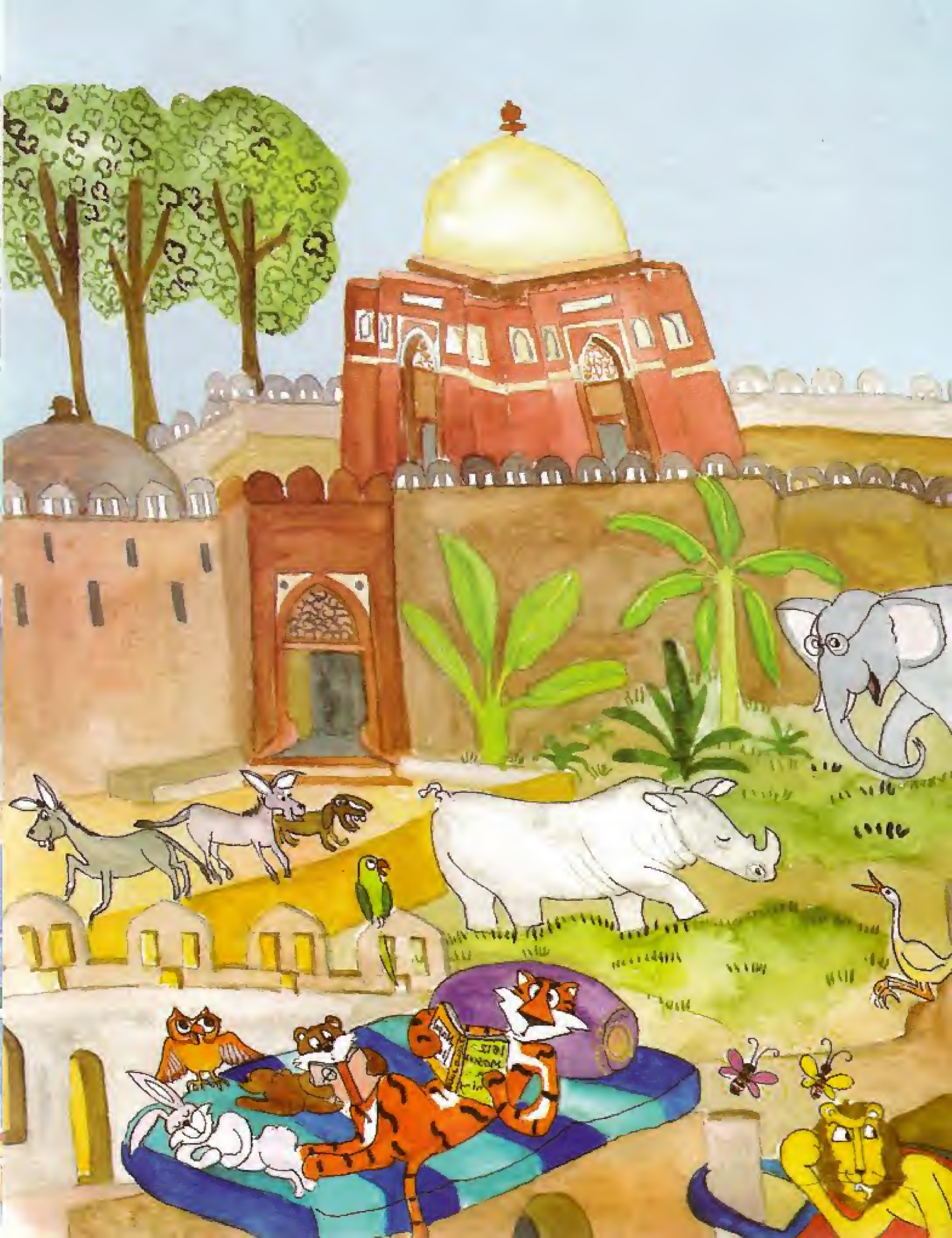
"You mean Nizamuddin's head was safe, because the Sultan lost his?" asked Tunnu.

"Yes. You know it's not just Sufis that come to Nizamuddin. People of all faiths come here, and every Thursday night the dargah echoes with the call of the qawwal. The death anniversaries, or Urs, of Nizamuddin and Amir Khusrau are celebrated here too."

Mayurdas, the walking wikipedcock, wanted to tell everyone what he'd learned too. "Amir Khusrau was a poet and wrote in Persian, the court language, and the local language called Hindawi. He invented the sitar and the qawwali. Oh, and did you know that Mughal poet-princess, Jahanara, is buried here and so is the famous poet, Mirza Ghalib?"

"That's a lot of poetry for one little village," commented Pandit Ooo Lala, drily.







Chapter 5

Tughlaqabad



Tughlaqabad Fort constitutes almost one-third of the capital city of India. Lying to the east of the Qutb Minar, its towering citadel looks over the entire Qutb-Badarpur Road. The fortress was built by Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq, the founder of the Tughlaq dynasty. The structure was built in less than four years to guard against the attacks by Mongols from central Asia, and also to serve as the capital for the ruler. It stands on a high, rocky ground with walls which reach to over 27 metres. This provided it with the necessary protection against attack. It is half-hexagonal in shape and has 13 doorways. The fort was abandoned soon after its construction with Ghiyasuddin's death in 1325.

Ramesh the rhinoceros and Ekhumukhi the elephant had found some delicious green grass and leaves to munch on outside the ramparts of the mini-fort that encloses the tomb of Ghiyasuddin, the first of the Tughlaqs. Beyond, were the crumbling ramparts of Tughlaqabad, the third city of Delhi, where a picnic was in full swing. Zero, TT, Lucky, Bula, Tota the parrot and Lahorimal the lion were lolling about and Dr Kamala was resting under a tree.

Pandit Ooo Lala began the history lesson. "In 1321, Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq built Tughlaqabad and its fort was protected by an artificial lake. The fort was connected to the tomb, also fortified, by a causeway..." but before he could get any further, Mayurdas butted in with a juicy tale.

"Right at the same time that old Ghiyasuddin was building his city, Nizamuddin had begun to excavate a tank near his shrine. The Sultan declared that workers should ONLY work on his city, and was infuriated when he heard that the saint's workers were working night and day to get the tank finished. So he forbade the sale of oil to Nizamuddin's workers — thinking that that would stop them working at night. But — wonder of wonders! — the saint turned water to oil, and got the tank built in record time. He cursed the arrogant Sultan, 'May the city be inhabited by Gujjars (nomadic shepherds) or lie desolate!' Hahaha ... it has turned out to be TRUE..."

A braying donkey joined the crowd hee-hawing merrily. "While relations between the saint and the Sultan worsened, the latter's son, Muhammed, became a follower of Nizamuddin. The Sultan, on his way back from a campaign in Bengal, had warned the saint that Delhi was too small to hold them both, and the saint had replied, "Delhi is still a long way off!"

The dog barked and muscled his way in, "Well, a reception was to be held for the Sultan and so a pavilion was erected. Muhammed asked the Sultan to enter with his new trophy: elephants from Bengal! It doesn't take much intelligence to know what happened next — the pavilion collapsed and Ghiyasuddin was dead. *Dilli door ast* — Delhi remained a long way away for the Sultan! And then began the infamous reign of the infamous Muhammed bin Tughlaq."

Lucky was the only one listening. "Did Muhammed shift from Tughlaqabad to Daulatabad?"

"Yes, he did," confirmed Pt. Ooo Lala. "What a foolish move! He thought he should park himself in the middle of India and rule his large empire. He took every stick and stone, and every crone and bone to the Deccan and, when that failed, they all returned. This time he moved back to near the Siri-Mehrauli area and renamed it Jahanpanah. Crazy guys these Sultans were!"

TT added "Lucky, did you know that a Tangerine came here? Named Ibn Batutta ...?"

Mayurdas flew in to join them. "I know him well and his book is fascinating. He travelled all the way from Tangiers in North Africa and became a judge in Delhi. It is worth a visit to see the remains of the Sultan's Thousand Pillared Palace and the tower, from where he reviewed his troops, at Vijay Mandal, near Sarvapriya Vihar. Imagine, that's where Ibn Batutta was!"

Near the picnickers, Lahorimal stretched and yawned, revealing lethal-looking claws and powerful teeth while the birds flew away in consternation.

Dr Kamala looked at Lahorimal's teeth and the birds and decided that it would be a good idea to move on before they scared anyone else.

"I'm getting peckish," she said. "Let's go to Hauz Khas village and see if we can find something to eat."







Chapter 6

Hauz Khas



Hauz Khas was named after the tank which Sultan Alauddin Khilji excavated in 1300, to supply water to his new city, Siri. Later, Firoze Shah

Tughlaq repaired the tank and established a madrasa (college) on its banks. Firoze Shah also raised several monuments on the southern and eastern banks of the reservoir. The Madrasa, established in 1352, was considered the largest and best equipped Islamic school anywhere in the world. The road south to the urban village of Hauz Khas is lined on both sides by ancient stone monuments, and the entire village is dotted with domed structures. Hauz Khas Village is now a popular tourist spot, with art galleries, restaurants and trendy designer boutiques.

Lahorimal the lion led the way down the narrow lanes and twisting gullies of Hauz Khas village. The leafy lane that led there reminded the animals of their home in Ranthambhore, and when they arrived at the village they were all in high spirits.

Zero wanted to buy some necklaces for his family back home, and Lucky hopped up on his back eager to help him choose. The others, not particularly keen on shopping, wandered along to the end of the lane and found themselves at a grassy monument overlooking a large lake.

Mayurdas preened his feathers and launched into a history lesson.

"Feroze Shah Tughlaq who ascended the throne of Delhi in 1351, was Muhammed's nephew," he began. "A scholarly man, Feroze Shah did





a lot for the restoration of the old Sultanate buildings and also very cleverly transported super-long Asokan edicts by boat. You can see one on top of his citadel at Ferozabad, now called Feroze Shah Kotla. This was Delhi's fifth city, lying along the Yamuna River. You can't see it from here — it's a long way north of here — but when Feroze Shah died in 1388, he was buried right here at Hauz Khas, adjoining the madrasa."

"Madrasa?" said Bandar, looking around and scratching his head. "What madrasa?"

"You're standing in it, you silly bandar!" hooted Pandit Ooo Lala, and all the animals laughed. Bandar's face turned red.

"This madrasa was built by Feroze Shah. He built loads of stuff! When the poet Mutahhar Kara first saw it, he exclaimed: *'I saw a space as wide as the plain of the world. The courtyard was soul-animating and its expanse was life-giving...'* Scholars from all over the Muslim world gathered here to teach the Koran, law, astronomy, philosophy, and medicine."

In 1987, Hauz Khas village opened its doors to shopkeepers and instead of the sound of music or the chatter of students, now all you can hear are the cries of shoppers, revving motor engines, and the mooing of cows. Since water was re-introduced into the tank again a few years ago, you can also make out the sounds of ducks and other waterbirds around the lake.

The animals sitting up at the madrasa heard a much more familiar voice:

"Stop! Thief!"

It was Zero! He came galloping up the road chasing a small boy who was clutching Zero's bag gleefully. The animals started to run towards him, but they were too far away. The little thief was getting away!

Suddenly, Bandar had a brilliant idea.

"Hey you!" he yelled at the top of his voice.

"Drop those peanuts!"

The boy looked down at the bag he was clutching and, thinking that it contained not money but peanuts, dropped it and ran away through the park.

Tota swooped down and picked up the purse, Zero could pay for his necklaces — and Bandar became the Hero of Hauz Khas!





Chapter 7

Lodi Gardens



Situated between Khan Market and Safdarjung's Tomb, Lodi Gardens is an oasis of green. Here you'll

find the 15th and 16th-century tombs of the Lodi and Sayyid Sultans. The gardens contain the tombs of Mohammad Shah and Sikander Lodi and other tombs, namely Bara Gumbad and Sheesh Gumbad. The tombs have the features typical of octagonal tombs, the stone chhajjas along the verandah arches and the sloping buttresses. Besides the tombs, there is the Bara Gumbad mosque, built with ashlar stone. Its rectangular prayer-hall has five arched openings and is a fine example of the early Mughal architecture. The gardens were re-landscaped by Joseph Allen Stein and Garrett Eckbo in 1968, and are now a popular spot for people jogging, bird-spotting, walking or just out for a picnic.

The great Vietnamese monk, Thich Nhat Hanh, on his visit to India, was giving a teaching on the other side of the Lodi Garden wall. The subject was 'Interdependence' and how ants and bees intent on building anthills and beehives work together without ego and ambition for the good of all...

"Guess what?" said TT peering over the wall. "The beehive and the anthill are the Sangha. Wow! Let's go and see."

They dashed off to where a group of ants were walking off sanctimoniously with their respective grains of sand. "Ouch!" cried TT in pain — an ant had given her a sharp nip. "I was only trying to get inspiration from you."





"That's not inspiration, but inquisitiveness!" replied the Ant tartly.

Meanwhile, Zero had joined a retired bureaucrat and a serving bureaucrat for a jog in the park.

"Are you a foreign diplomat?" asked the retired bureaucrat looking at Zero through a cataract haze.

"Well, not a diplomat. But, in a manner of speaking, I am a foreigner," replied Zero.

Lucky began to giggle uncontrollably, "He's from Africa!"

The serving bureaucrat looked Zero up and down. "I've been to Africa with a delegation of banana planters, but I've never met an African with spots!"

"Neither have I!" giggled Lucky.

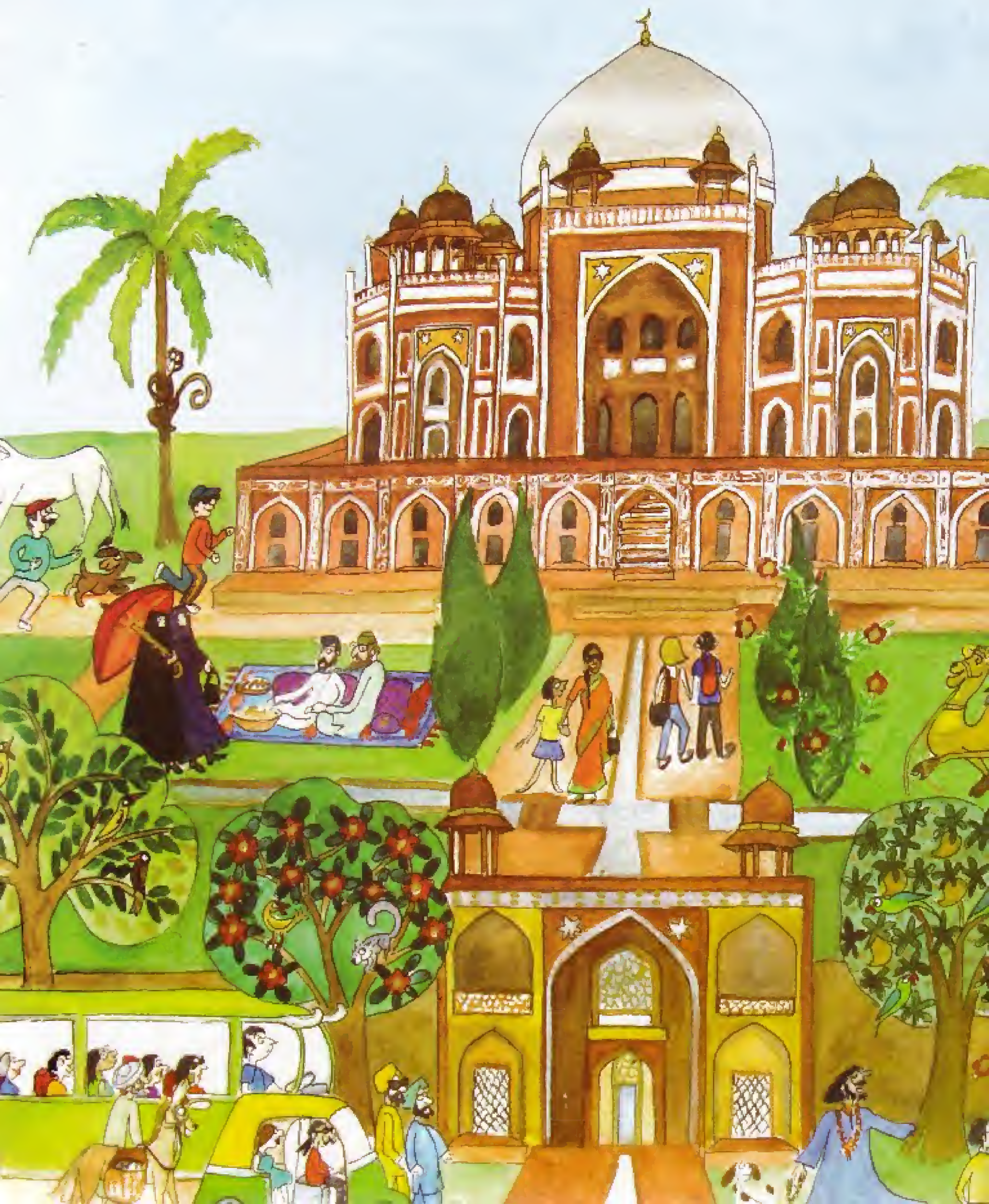
The retired bureaucrat commented, "In my time, an African with a long neck and spots was called a Giraffe, but things keep changing..."

The Zen monks from across the wall decided to enter Lodi Gardens and take different groups for walking meditation — walking together like a 'centipede.' So there were these brown-robed willowy monks, sporting cane hats and fanning themselves with palm-leaf fans. Ladies with half-closed eyes moved slowly and deliberately like Bugaku dancers. They were doing everything mindfully.

TT found it all very strange. "Surely, if they keep their eyes shut they won't see all the nice flowers and lovely monuments?"

"I agree," remarked a furry dog, who happened to be passing by. Yes indeed, the mindful meditators missed the riotous colours that beamed from the flowerbeds, the fine tombs of the Sultans of Delhi. But they also missed the Black Cat security and the terrorists' most wanted politician!





Chapter 8

Humayun's Tomb



Babur established the Mughal dynasty, defeated the Rajputs and Afghans, and lived his Indian years in Agra, on the banks of the Yamuna. Once, when his son Humayun fell dangerously ill, Babur offered his life to God so that his son could be saved. After his death, Humayun ascended to the throne, and he began to build yet another city — Dinpanah. His tomb was built in 1565 by his wife, Haji Begum. The tomb stands in the centre of a square garden, divided into four main parts by causeways (charbagh). The Taj Mahal is thought to have been inspired by Humayun's Tomb.

Pandit Ooo Lala was narrating the story of the Mughals to a group of owlets. "Alas, Humayun lost his kingdom to a bright young Afghan from Bihar, Sher Shah Suri, in 1540. Sher Shah moved into Dinpanah and completed the city. His short reign was most productive and Indo-Afghan architecture bloomed as never before. In the Purana Qila area, erstwhile Dinpanah, owlets, you must fly off and see some beautiful buildings: Qila-i-Kohna mosque, Lal Darwaza and Khairul Manazil.

"Humayun stayed in exile at the Persian court and there he learnt the imperial style. With the help of his general Bairam Khan, he won back the throne of Hindustan and returned to Dinpanah. Alas, a year after he returned, in 1556, he fell to his death by falling down the high stairs of the Sher Mandal, his library at the Purana

Qila. His widow, Hamida, built a tomb for him set in a magnificent garden. It was quite a jump from the modest-walled garden tombs of Sikander Lodi! This was no mere Sultan's tomb, but that of an Emperor."

It had begun to rain, so the animals took shelter under the arches of Humayun's tomb. Mayurdas, quite fed up that Pandit Ooo Lala was getting all the attention, and decided to tell them stories about Emperor Akbar and his clever courtier, Birbal. He was mid-way through his second tale, when they were interrupted by the sound of hooves. Two horsemen trotted around the corner.

"Hai Ram!" exclaimed TT, "those are ghosts! Mughal ghosts riding past in broad daylight!" They were certainly Mughals and one even sported a falcon on his hand!

"Bad hunting," muttered Ghost One.

"Very bad," replied Ghost Two. "The river's filthy and bird life is getting scarce."

"I wonder what the Shahenshah is doing about pollution. Last evening, the dust and fog was so thick and I couldn't find my way home," commented Ghost One.

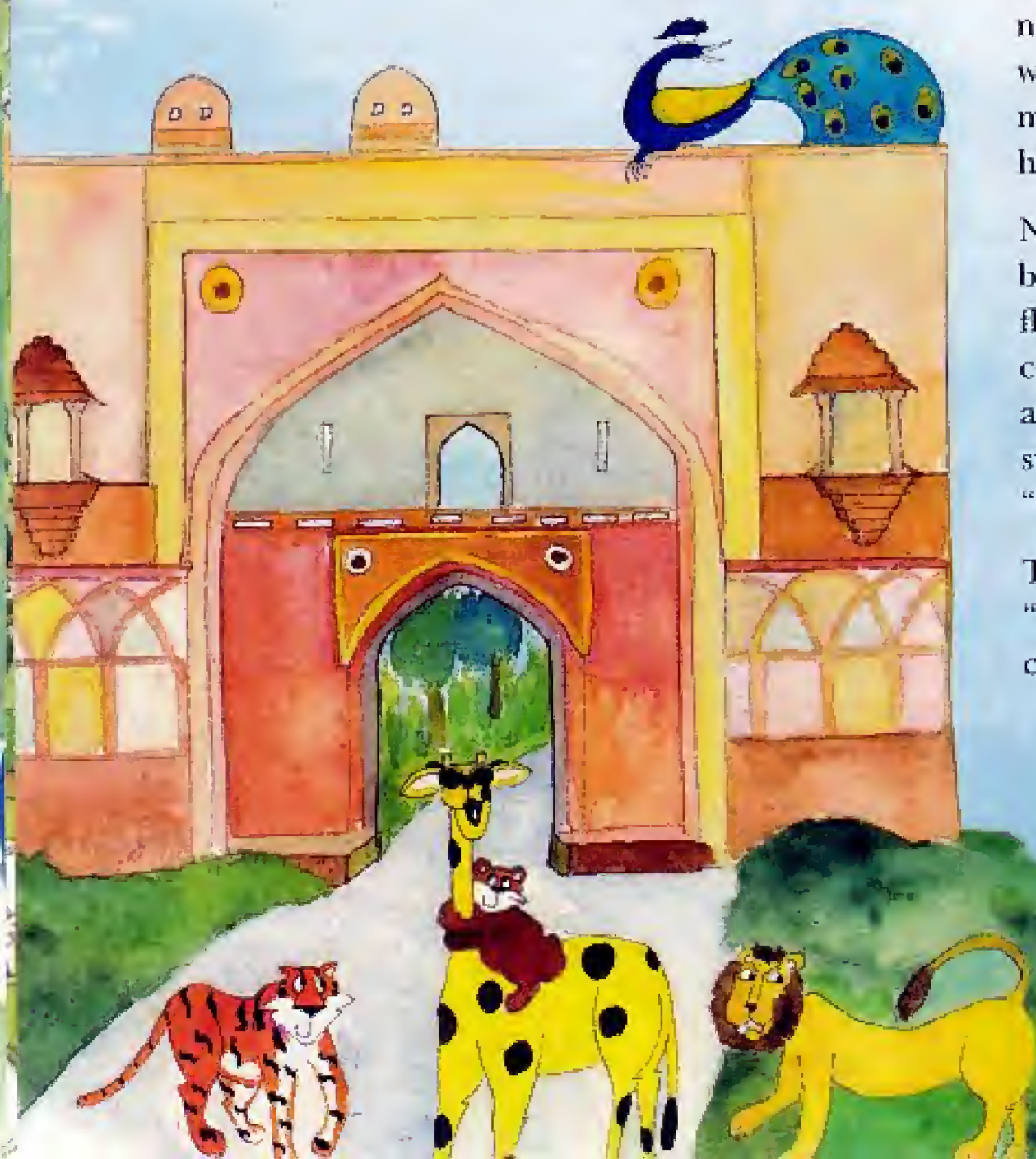
"Too many carts and carriages on the street," responded Ghost Two.

"And what's worse," said the falcon, joining their conversation, "it's getting warmer, too."

Bandar chortled with delight. "Problems never change! Pollution and global warming! We should ask the environment minister to invite these Mughal ghosts to his next conference!"

Nearby, more tourists disgorged from buses and auto-rickshaws. More people, a flowerpot seller, and two Sikh mechanics all converged on Humayun's tomb and amidst all the chatter and honking was a lone Sufi, swirling and twirling and singing loudly, "*Ha-re Raa-ma, Ha-re Kreesh-na.*"

Tota took off into the skies screeching: "India is Great! *Jai Hind!* This is composite culture for you!"





DONATE
GENEROUSLY
2 SAVE US!





Chapter 9

Lal Qila



Red Fort (or Lal Qila) is one of the largest old monuments in Delhi. Mughal Emperor Shahjahan started construction of the massive fort in 1638 and work was completed in 1648. It served as the capital of the Mughals until 1857, and later as a military camp for the British. The last Mughal emperor to occupy the fort was Bahadur Shah Zafar. The fort contains halls of public and private audience — Diwan-i-Aam and Diwan-i-Khas, respectively — domed and arched marble palaces, plush private apartments, a mosque and gardens. The entrance of the Fort is through Lahore Gate, named so because it faces Lahore (now in Pakistan), which leads to Chandni Chowk.

Zero was in no mood to linger today. “We’ve already been in Delhi for a week and we still haven’t seen Red Fort — Lal Qila — the most famous monument of them all. Come on, slowcoaches!”

They stood amongst the beautiful palaces looking up at the ramparts, from where the Emperor used to command fights between elephants below. “I wonder if I could get two Emperors to fight instead?” wondered Ekhmukhi, scratching his head with his trunk.

Mayurdas was on the roof of Diwan-i-Khas, built entirely with white marble, trilling to the beauty of its architecture: “*If on earth be an Eden of bliss, it is this, it is this, it is this...*”

“At first, Shah Jahan ruled from Agra but he found it just too hot and crowded. So, in the

eleventh year of his reign, the Emperor left for Delhi. Here, on the banks of the Yamuna, he began to create this poem in red sandstone and white marble, interspersed with gardens and fountains. Persian carpets of great beauty, awnings and chiks that reproduced the flowers of paradise, semi-precious gems that coloured marble arabesques and, above all, the glorious Peacock Throne made up the royal world within the Fort."

"Must have been quite gorgeous," quacked the ducks. "But Shah Jahan could not have been as handsome as our turbaned Toad!"

"Ugh!" said Ekmukhi looking down on a bright green toad wearing a jewelled turban and sitting on a lotus leaf. "He thinks it's the Peacock Throne ..."



Mayurdas droned on. "We are in the palace area and the palaces are: Mumtaz Mahal, where the museum is, Rang Mahal, Shish Mahal, Khas Mahal — here you can see the wonderful screen with the scales of justice — and the Diwan-i-Khas, which was the place for special audience for favoured courtiers like me! It took ten years to complete the Fort."

The turbaned Toad piped up, "There is Aurangzeb's Moti Masjid, and a palace added by Bahadur Shah Zafar. Of course, the British pulled down much and added a line of army barracks." He flicked his tongue towards a row of ugly brick buildings. Quite a contrast to the delicate world of the ghazal and the nightingale! Lucky scratched one floppy ear. "I've had enough of monuments," he said. "All these forts stink of history!"

"Nonsense," responded the turbaned Toad. "History is money and you can hardly say that it stinks. It simply purrrrs."

"Well," said Lahorimal the lion tartly, "I hope you realise that our being here is neither historical nor is it a money spinner. C'mon, let's go to Lahore Gate."

"What's that bustling street down there?" said Lucky, pointing his paw across the busy road.

"Chandni Chowk!" squawked Tota the parrot. "Shall we check it out?"







Chapter 10

Chandni Chowk



Chandni Chowk is one Delhi's oldest markets. The historical accounts of the market detail the times of trade when merchants from Turkey, China, Holland and other distant lands used to come here, with exotic weapons, exotic birds and tapestry. It is said that it was once lined with beautiful fountains and canals. The moon reflected in the main canal was said to have given the place its name ('chandni' means 'moon'). Although it is now a busy, crowded market, much of its old-world charm still remains. Here you'll also find the massive Jama Masjid, the 17th-century mosque. Chandni Chowk is one of the narrowest, busiest and most prosperous trading centres of Delhi — a fascinating maze of shops and eateries, most of which are no more than two by five feet.

Tunnu hired a cycle rickshaw to drive down Chandni Chowk, from the Lahore Gate of the Red Fort to Fatehpuri Masjid, the heart of Shahjahanabad. Her guide book was a mine of information, and she read it out aloud as they pedalled through the crowded, noisy streets.

"Shahjahanabad, built according to the Hindu architectural principles of Vaastu Shastra, is shaped like a bow and fronted by the river. There are coffee shops here, where once swashbuckling noblemen and princes flocked to hear the latest couplets by great poets such as Bedil, Dard, Sauda and Mir Taqi Mir. On a moonlit night the central canal, *Nahr-i-Bihisht* (Canal of Paradise) was liquid white

gold, redolent with the perfumes of Hindustan! Try going there today: it is pure chaos and its aristocratic days have slipped away into history.”

That was a bit rude of the guide book, but Shahjahanabad in its heyday, was more beautiful than Baghdad and Constantinople. Over the centuries, it has been destroyed and looted by the armies of Nadir Shah and Ahmed Shah Abdalli, by Jats and Marathas and ruthless mercenaries.

Sunil, the rickshaw-wallah, was a resident of this part. “Sir-Madam!” he said, addressing TT who, although she was a female, had formidable whiskers, “The British were the last of the marauders and in 1857, when Bahadur Shah Zafar was sent to his Rangoon jail, this great city was totally destroyed. The palaces and gardens were laid to waste. A railway line cut through the city and the whistle of the engine drowned the songs of the dancing girls...”

Pinky sold chhole-bhatura near Fatehpuri Masjid at the end of Chandni Chowk. Pinky was a romantic and, as he mixed chickpeas and squeezed lime juice, he yearned for the days when caged tigers and leopards were sold to princes and horsemen who rode up and down the street; when covered palanquins conveyed a Mughal beauty to her prayers at Fatehpuri; when the itr-wallah’s street would be fragrant with the perfumes of Hindustan — jasmine, gulab, maati and guggul; when storytellers sat on the steps of Jama Masjid and told fantastic tales of Amir Hamza and... “Ah well,” sighed Pinky, “now all this is one large slum!”

“Where’s Zero got to?” said Lahorimal looking around from his rickshaw. He hadn’t seen the giraffe for quite a while and was beginning to worry. Suddenly, Tota swooped down and landed on his back. “There he is!” he cried, pointing up with one bright green wing. It was quite a sight to see Zero! While watching the skyward leap of kites, his long neck got entangled with the lamp post! And he was having such a good time that he had not yet thought of disentangling himself.

“Wow!” he exclaimed to the lamp post. “That must be TT. She looks most stylish with her sunglasses!”

TT, lounging in a rickshaw, was an incredible sight — all the passers-by goggled at a gorgeous tigress wearing goggles!

“Hai Bhagwan!” said Pinky, “what’s happening here? Are we seeing the effects of globalisation? First there’s a giraffe wrapped around a lamp post and now a tiger in a rickshaw!”

“Never mind globalisation,” said Mayurdas, “just look at all this litter. I can’t imagine that once upon a time this place was full of magnificent havelis. It’s all been downhill since Nadir Shah of Persia and Ahmad Shah Abdalli invaded back in the mid-eighteenth century. Then there was the terrible time of the Mutiny..”

“You mean the Uprising?” chipped in Lucky.

“...well, whatever you call it, in 1857. When Ghalib wrote, *‘An ocean of blood churns around me. Alas! Were these all! The future will show what more remains for me to see.’*”

Well," sighed Pinky again, "now there are only memories in the names: in the kuchas, which were occupation-specific zones; in the katras, which were the workplaces and homes of craftsmen; and in special markets like the spice market of Khari Baoli, the glitter and gauze shops of Kinari Bazaar, or the paper market of Chawri Bazaar. But some famous eating places are still around, of which the earliest are the Ghanewala Halwai, the paratha shops of Parathewali Gali, and Karim's, famous for its Mughal cuisine."

At the mention of all that delicious food, our friends realised they were very hungry, and eagerly set off in search of the delicious eateries of Chandni Chowk.





Safdarjung's Tomb



Safdarjung's tomb is a garden tomb in a marble mausoleum located at the start of Lodi Road. It was built in 1754 by Nawab Shuja-ud-Daulah, the son of Safdarjung (Viceroy of Awadh during the Mughal Empire). It represents the last phase of the Mughal style of architecture. The tomb of Safdarjung was built in red sandstone and buff stone. There are four water canals leading to several smaller Pavilions like Jangli Mahal, Moti Mahal and Badhah Pasand. The complex also has a madrasa. The Archeological Survey of India maintains a library over the main gateway.

Lahorimal, lolling in the banana grove and listening to Bula and Lucky clumsily making music, mused, "Jahandar Shah was quite a merry monarch and fell madly in love with a singing-dancing girl, Lal Kunwar, who came from a family of musicians. He made her the Empress of Hindustan! That's quite bold, what do you think, Tota?"

Tota was amused, "Jolly sporting of Jahandar! A very sour observer wrote that Delhi at the time was immersed 'in a life of ease and pleasure; and music, both vocal and instrumental, reached such heights that in all quarters of the city, except for the sounds of music and lusty shouting, no other sound was heard.'"

"God!" Lahorimal exclaimed, "I do hope they were better musicians than Lucky and Bula or else ..." He lunged at them in mock anger. Lucky stopped singing and squealed with delight.

"My favourite," Lahorimal continued, "is Muhammed Shah Rangeela, another colourful monarch who ascended the throne in 1719. Alas, his public life was spent losing chunks of the empire and the final straw was the defeat by Nadir Shah in 1739. Although Nadir Shah (who stole the Peacock Throne and the Kohinoor Diamond among many other things) and Ahmed Shah Abdalli destroyed the City, yet Shahjahanabad survived quite well."

Tota piped in, "The flip side of tragedy is good music and good poetry. '*Break the temples and uproot the mosques/But do not break anyone's heart, for that is the abode of God.*' This was the age of Bedil, Sauda, Mir Taqi Mir and Dard. The golden age ended with Mirza Ghalib. Did you know that a camp language of the common soldier, Urdu, became the court language!"

Bula pouted, "You are a real Know-it-all. Did you also know that the musical form *khayal* was perfected, and that *qaawwali* and *kathak* blossomed under Rangeela's patronage? And so did the Ramlila, which the Emperor loved watching."

Lahorimal butted in, "Bula and Lucky, I don't suppose you duffers have learnt any music or dance! But I suppose you can do very well today. Everyone is a singer or a dancer... the Rotten Renaissance."

This was the period of urban gardens, typical charbaghs with a *baradari* (summer house) and full of fruit trees, flowers, birds and fish. Days were filled with sighs and nights with longing, very good for poetry...

"Imagine," sighed TT, "one could sit in a marble pavillion and eat the most exquisite biryani! I could have been Muhammed Shah's Queen, who built the Qudsia gardens on the river bank!"

"Too many mosquitoes," said Zero, "and it would have been the days before Flit and Hit."

Beyond Shahjahanabad lay estates of great nobles, like Jaisinghpura, the estate of the Maharaja of Jaipur. He built one of his many Jantar Mantars in what is now Parliament Street. Both Hindu and Islamic astronomical systems were used and they surprisingly were accurate! It is a fun place to be in as there are so many shapes and odd spots to explore.

Nearby, there's the Hanuman Mandir, where Tunnu decided to buy bangles.

"By the way the Tuesday fair is very old, and started probably in the eighteenth century," said Tota. "But the temple dates back to the time of the Mahabharata. They say Tulsidas, author of the *Rama-charita-manasa*, wrote the *Hanuman Chalisa* here. The temple is even topped with an Islamic crescent that Akbar gave them! Wow! That's really quite something."



The property of Safdar Jung lay en route to Mehrauli. A Persian by birth, Safdar Jung became Nawab of Awadh and served two Mughal emperors, Muhammed Shah and Ahmed Shah. He died in 1755 and Safdarjung's Tomb is the last great Mughal mausoleum.

Mayurdas was speaking to Moti the Pariah Dog. "Every historian," the peacock said, "will tell you how much Mughal architecture had declined now, especially when one looks at the remote and austere beauty of Humayun's tomb or the poetry of the Taj Mahal."

Needless to say, Moti had no clue about this. "And," thought Bula, "that's not entirely true, because when one walks through the charbagh one sees how graceful the Tomb is, full of humans, birds and animals chattering and laughing. And did you see the cow cooling herself in the water wearing Gucci sunglasses and the old clerk who decided to fish for fish not to mention Lucky, that silly rabbit, perched on one of the fountains?"

The 18th century and its impecunious ways ended in 1803, when Lord Lake defeated the Maratha, protectors of the Mughal Empire and the era of the British protectorate was ushered in.





Chapter 12

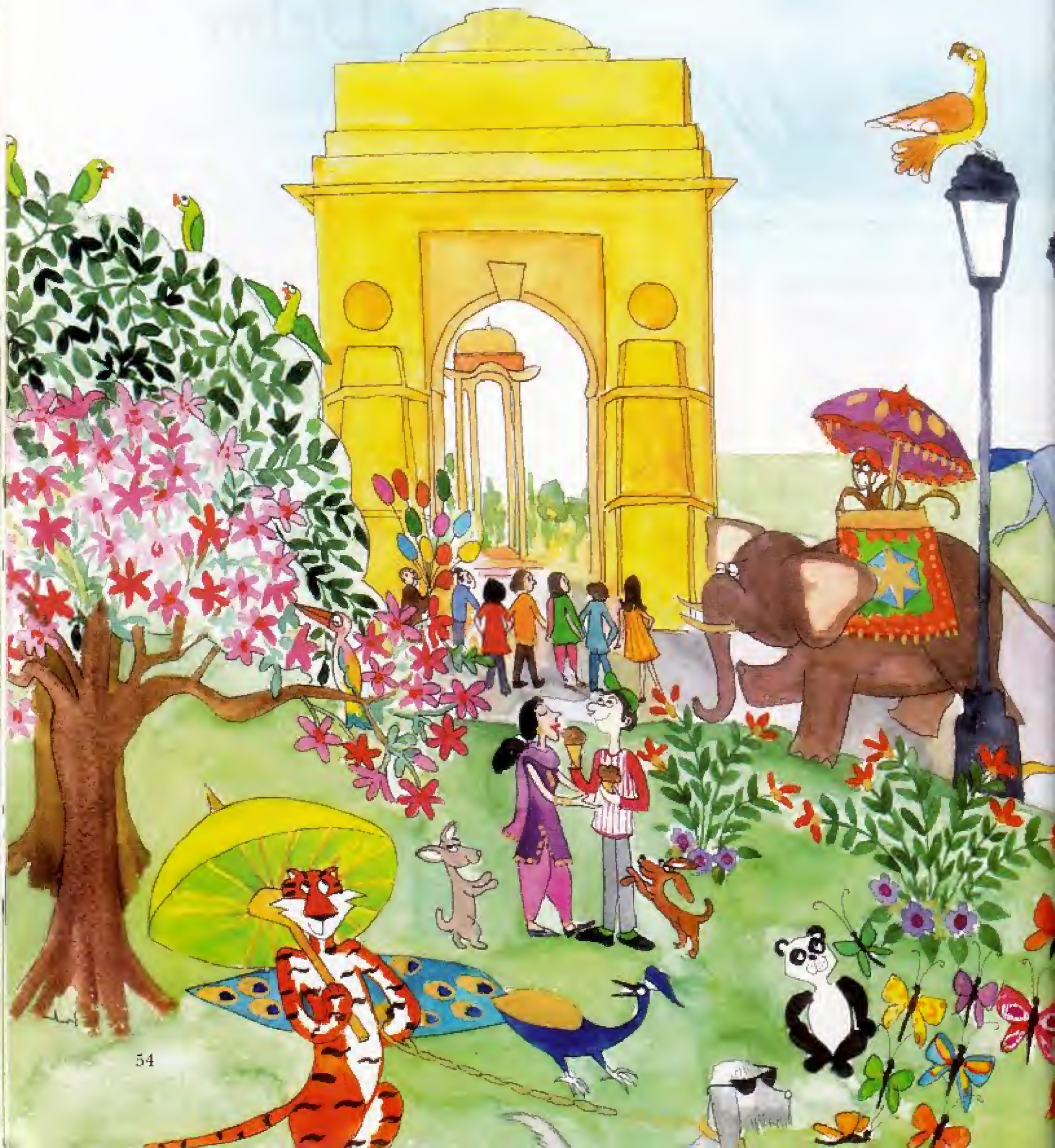
New Delhi



The skyline of Delhi, once famed for its minarets, domes and battlements, is now dominated by office blocks and flyovers. The horrors of Partition and large-scale migrations created problems in decades following Independence. Connaught Place was completed in 1933 and was intended to be the showpiece of Lutyens' Delhi. It is built in two concentric circles, with a garden in the centre—underneath which now, there is the metro station. CP (as it is known) was named after the Duke of Connaught, and most people still call it that, although it's official name is Rajiv Chowk after the late Indian Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi. Just south of CP is the grand boulevard of Rajpath, with the parliament buildings and the President's House, Rashtrapati Bhavan, and one end, and India Gate at the other. Delhi's population has always been very mixed, with people streaming in from all parts of India and from other countries too. Delhi has survived and has, in the twenty-first century, boomed with a population of almost 14 million! The pace is fast as the city hurries to catch up with the world.

Lucky the rabbit had found a cyber café and was chatting online with his American e-pal, Chocolate Moose of Yellowstone Park. "We're having a great time in Delhi," he typed. "It's amazing how much history has happened here! I just met some British travellers who are here for a holiday — but 150 years back, the British were the rulers here! They established their own city in what is now called Civil Lines — up near Delhi University. After 1857, all the heroes of the Hindu epics and all that Islamic heritage





were kicked out and replaced with King Arthur and Robin Hood!"

"That's what happened to us, too," Chocolate Moose replied. "Instead of Cherokee and Choctaw myths and the whispering winds of the prairies, we got the English language! I learnt in geography that Delhi was the capital city of India. Is that true?"

"Yes," replied Lucky. "But it wasn't always. In fact until 1911, the capital was in Kolkata (which used to be Calcutta). But King George V decided to shift the capital to Delhi and that's when it became 'New Delhi'."

Tunnu the tiger came sauntering into the café and peered over Lucky's shoulder. "Hey," she said, "why are you telling that ol' moose about old New Delhi? All that British architecture and Raj stuff? Tell him about new New Delhi — the metro, the malls, the flyovers, the..."

"Oh shush," said Lucky. "I'm trying to type!"

TT decided to leave him to it. She sauntered around the beautifully renovated circular shopping centre called Connaught Place. It was built by the British — just like the Rashtrapati Bhavan and the two Secretariat buildings and all those glorious gracious avenues and roudabouts of what's called 'Lutyen's Delhi' (named after the main architect).

TT bumped into Dr Kamala who was also out for a stroll. "When did British rule end?" she asked.



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Pandit Ooo Lala aloofly perched on the lamp post, muttered, "Well, what can I do? I can't change the world. I guess I'm just an old-fashion, endangered, outdated bird."

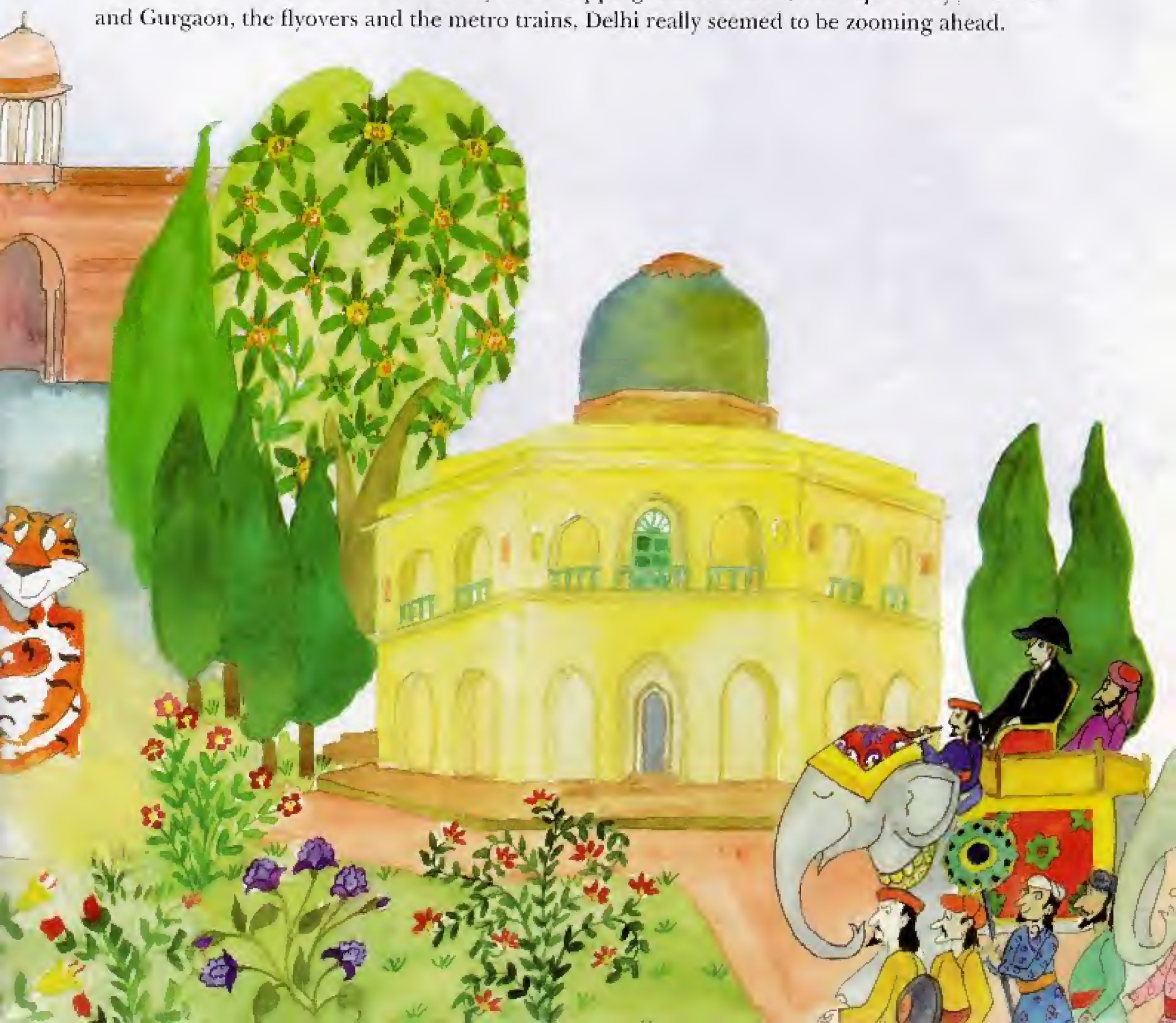
Bula and TT had joined the anti-GM Foods rally.

"TT, you traitor!" yelled Bula when he noticed her sipping an ice-cold Coke.

"I am thirsty, and there's not a single homemade eats stall anywhere here," he retorted, "except for those yucky paneer burgers. Ugh!"

Zero was happy having his hooves polished. "So glad the shoeshine boy and the balloon seller still have a place here... at least some things haven't changed..." he mused.

The cars and buses and autos whizzed around India Gate, adding to the din and chaos and colour and noise. What with the swanky new shopping malls of Saket, the expressways to Noida and Gurgaon, the flyovers and the metro trains, Delhi really seemed to be zooming ahead.



"But you know," said Dr Kamala, trying to cross the road, "New Delhi is not all noise, pollution and pushing and shoving. There are some lovely calm spots other than the picturesque stones of the past. There is the Baha'i Temple — the Lotus Temple in Kalkaji: it's a beautiful building, set in lovely gardens, and such a peaceful place to meditate.

"Then there's Buddha Jayanti Park, along the spine of the Ridge, where you can see a golden Buddha resting under a Tibeto-Saracenic *chhattri*. It was gifted to India by the Dalai Lama. In May, when the markets are gold with mangoes and the trees red with gulmohur blossoms, Buddha Jayanti is celebrated in front of the golden Buddha. Ducks, geese, monks and others gather to pay homage to the Enlightened One while butterflies and bees dance in the heat. Even the snails come out."

Pandit Ooo Lala, swooped down on silent wings, and while all the other animals listened, quietly, recited a Buddhist saying:

*"For as long as space endures
And for as long as living beings remain
Until then may I, too, abide
To dispel the misery of the world."*

— Santideva: Bodhicharyavtara





TIMELINE OF DELHI

1000 BCE Late Harappan settlements

300—200 BCE Purana Qila settlement. Legend has it that this was the site of Indraprastha (also called Inderpat), the capital of the Pandavas of the Mahabharata. (Disputed dates 5000 BCE or 1400 BCE).
Mid-3rd century BCE Ashokan edict.

700—1160 CE Tomara dynasty

736 Anang Pal builds the fortified Lal Kot. Surrounding area also known as Dhillika or Yoginipura.

1160—1192 Chauhan dynasty

1180 Lal Kot captured by Chauhans and renamed Qila Rai Pithora.

1206—1526 Rule of the Delhi Sultanate, includes the Mamluk (Slave), Khalji, Tughlaq, Sayyid and Lodi dynasties.

- 1206 Qutbuddin Aibak becomes the first Sultan of Delhi.
- 1211 Iltutmish becomes Sultan. Qutbuddin Bakhtiar Kaki of the Chisti order sets up his chilla at Mehrauli.
- 1221 Mongol invasions begin in India and continue till 1327.
- 1233 Iltutmish shifts the iron pillar, supposed to have been erected by Chandragupta II at a temple in Udayagiri, to the Qutb complex.
- 1236 Raziya becomes Sultana.
- 1261 Nizamuddin Auliya arrives in Delhi.
- 1266 Balban becomes Sultan.
- 1290 Jalaluddin Khalji becomes Sultan.
- 1296 Alauddin assassinates his uncle, Jalaluddin Khalji, and becomes Sultan.
- 1303 Foundations of Siri laid by Alauddin Khalji. Chittor falls.
- 1306 Malik Kafur's invasion of South India begins.
- 1316 Death of Alauddin Khalji.
- 1320 Death of Mubarak Shah. End of Khalji dynasty.
- 1320 Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq becomes Sultan of Delhi.
- 1321 Construction of Tughlaqabad begins. Completed in 1324.
- 1324 Muhammed bin Tughlaq becomes Sultan of Delhi.
- 1325 Death of Nizamuddin and Amir Khusrau.
- 1326 Muhammed bin Tughlaq shifts his capital from Delhi to Daulatabad, but soon returns to Delhi to establish a new city named Jahanpatah.
- 1334 Ibn Batutta visits Delhi and lives here till 1341.
- 1351 Death of Muhammed bin Tughlaq. Feroze Shah Tughlaq, Sultan of Delhi, builds Ferozabad, also called Feroze Shah Kotla.
- 1354 Madrasa of Hauz Khas built.
- 1356 Death of Naziruddin Mahmud Chiragh-e-Dilli.
- 1398 Timur of Samarkand sets out to invade India.

1414—1421 Rule of Sayyid dynasty

- 1451 Bahlol Khan Lodi becomes Sultan.
- 1504 Sikander Lodi shifts his capital from Delhi to gra.
- 1526 Ibrahim Lodi dies, ending the Delhi Sultanate.



1526—1540 Mughal dynasty

- 1526 Babur, a Central Asian prince, invades India, defeats the Lodi Sultan, and establishes the Mughal dynasty.
- 1530 Humayun becomes Emperor and builds Dinpanah, in the village of Inderpat.

1540—1555 Suri dynasty

- 1537 Sher Shah Suri, a Pashtun, defeats Humayun, establishes the Suri dynasty, and becomes Sultan. He improves Dinpanah, now known as Purana Qila, and repairs the Grand Trunk road that runs from Lahore to Dhaka and passes through Delhi.
- 1555 Humayun overthrows the Suri dynasty, becomes Emperor and re-establishes the Mughal dynasty. He dies in 1556.



1555—1857 Mughal dynasty

- 1556 Akbar becomes Emperor. Humayun's tomb is built.
- 1605 Jehangir becomes Emperor.
- 1628 Shah Jahan becomes Emperor.
- 1639 Building of Shahjahanabad (now called Old Delhi) and Red Fort.
- 1644 Jama Masjid built.
- 1658 Aurangzeb becomes Emperor.
- 1650 Chandni Chowk designed by Jahanara Begum, daughter of Shah Jahan.
- 1707—1719 Several weak Mughal Emperors. The Emperor comes under the protection of the Mahrattas.
- 1719 Muhammed Shah Rangeela becomes Emperor.
- 1724 Present Hanuman Mandir built. Jantar Mantar built in Delhi by Maharaja Jai Singh II of Jaipur.
- 1739 Nadir Shah of Persia invades India.
- 1748—1803 Rapid decline of the Mughal Empire.
- 1857 Indian Mutiny. Bahadur Shah Zafar, last Mughal Emperor, is defeated by the British.

1858—1947 British Raj

- 1877 First Delhi Durbar, where the British Queen, Victoria I is proclaimed Empress of India.
- 1903 Delhi Durbar to commemorate coronation of King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra (King and Queen of England) as Emperor and Empress of India.
- 1911 Delhi Durbar to commemorate coronation of George V and Queen Mary (King and Queen of England) as Emperor and Empress of India. Capital of British Raj moved from Calcutta to Delhi.
- 1912 Raisina Hill selected as site of buildings for new capital. Edwin Lutyens appointed consultant for design and construction of the buildings.
- 1914—1918 World War I. Indian soldiers fight on behalf of England.
- 1916 New Delhi Municipal Committee established.
- 1929 Edwin Lutyens completes design and construction of New Delhi (also called Lutyen's Delhi).
- 1931 New Delhi inaugurated.
- 1947 India becomes an independent country. Partition.

1947 Independent India

- 1968 Already existing Lodi Gardens (known as Lady Willingdon Park) re-landscaped by the American architect, J.A. Stein.
- 1987 Baha'i temple built (also known as the Lotus Temple).
- 1992 Statue of the Buddha installed at Buddha Jayanti Park.
- 1998 Construction of Delhi Metro begins.
- 2007 Select City Mall opened.
- 2010 Commonwealth Games held in Delhi.

POETS

- 1532—1623 Tulsidas, Avadhi poet, thought to have composed the Hanuman Chalisa at the site of present-day Hanuman Mandir.
- 1642—1720 Mirza Abdul Qadir Bedil, Persian poet.
- 1706—1781 Mirza Muhammed Rafi Sauda, Persian and Urdu poet.
- 1721—1785 Khvaja Mir Dard, Persian and Urdu poet.
- 1723—1810 Mir Taqi Mir, Urdu poet.
- 1797—1869 Mirza Ghalib, Urdu poet.







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